

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 04121 081704Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 4121

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB TS
SUBJ: US-TUNISIAN LABOR MOVEMENT RELATIONS

PARIS AND BRUSSELS FOR LABATT

1. DURING MY TALK JUNE 6 WITH HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR., SON OF THE PRESIDENT AND NOW SPECIAL ADVISOR TO THIS FATHER, I MENTIONED A NUMBER OF DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN VISITORS OF HIS ACQUAINTANCE WHO ARE SCHEDULED TO BE IN TUNIS IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS (INCLUDING RETIRED AMBASSADOR/ASST. SECRETARY PARKER T. HART, EX-AMBASSADOR JOHN A. CALHOUN AND AFL-CIO REPRESENTATIVE IRVING BROWN). I SAID WE HAD LEARNED OF BROWN'S PLANS TO VISIT TUNIS LATER THIS MONTH JUST THE DAY BEFORE.

2. BOURGUIBA, JR. MADE NOTES OF THESE VISITS AND THEIR DATES, BUT ASKED WHY IRVING BROWN IS COMING DOWN AT THIS TIME "WHEN HE KNOW HE'S NOT WELCOME". HE CLAIMED BROWN "IS ONE OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR PUFFING UP (IMPRISONED UGTT LEADER) HABIB ACHOUR AND TURNING HIM INTO A MEGALOMANIAC". I IMMEDIATELY TOOK ISSUE WITH MY FRIEND AT THIS POINT SAYING
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PAGE 02 TUNIS 04121 081704Z

THAT I DSAGREED COMPLETELY WITH THIS CHARACTERIZATION OF BROWN. I POINTED OUT THAT HE (BOURGUIBA JR.) HAD PROBABLY NOT BEEN FOLLOWING LABOR UNION AFFAIRS LAST FALL WHEN IRVING BROWN CAME TO TUNIS AFTER SEPARATE INVITATIONS BY BOTH HABIB ACHOUR AND PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA. HIS PERFORMANCE, I EMPHASIZED, WAS A A GO-BETWEEN AND PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT PART IN MAINTAINING LABOR PEACE FOR AT LEAST THREE MONTHS.

BROWN HAD GONE TO GREAT LENGTHS IN OCTOBER TO DISSUADE HABIB ACHOUR OF THE WISDOM OF USING THE GENERAL STRIKE AS A WEAPON, TO PERSUADE HIM NOT TO UNDERMINE THE GOT'S FOREIGN POLICY STANCE ON THE MIDEAST AND TO RESIST BEING TAKEN IN BY QADHAFI. I TOLD HIM I WAS SURE HEDI NOUIRA WOULD CONFIRM MY VERY FAVORABLE OPINION OF IRVING BROWN'S ROLE HERE LAST FALL.

3. NEXT I TOLD BORGUIBA JR. THAT THE GOT SHOULD BE GRATEFUL TO BROWN FOR THE SANE AND BALANCED ATTITUDE HE HIMSELF TOOK AND HE HIMSELF PERSUADED THE AFL-CIO LEADERSHIP TO TAKE AFTER THE JANUARY 26 EVENTS HERE. I SAID THAT NO OTHER MAJOR LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE WORLD HAD TREATED TUNISIA SO CHARITABLY SINCE JANUARY 26 AS HAS THE AFL-CIO AND THAT THIS IS CHIEFLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF AND SYMPATHY FOR TUNISIA WHICH BROWN AND HIS PRINCIPALS HAVE ALWAYS EXHIBITED. GRANTED THERE HAD SOMETIMES BEEN COOL PERIODS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BUT PATIENCE, COMMON SENSE AND RESTRAINT ON BOTH SIDES HAD ALWAYS PREVAILED. IT WAS MY HOPE THAT HIS WOULD AGAIN PROVE TRUE. I SAID THAT IF IRVING BROWN CAME DOWN FROM PARIS FOR A VISIT I WOULD LIKE HIM (BOURGUIBA, JR.) TO TALK WITH HIM AND HAVE EACH LAY THEIR CARDS ON THE TABLE. THE LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE OF BOTH TOE USG AND GOT SHOULD BE THE MAINTENANCE OF THE TRADITIONALLY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP OUR LABOR MOVEMENTS HAD ENJOYED, I CONCLUDED. HE AGREED THAT THIS WAS BASICALLY THE RIGHT POLICY, BUT GAVE NO INDICATION THAT HE ACCEPTED MY DEFENSE
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PAGE 03 TUNIS 04121 081704Z

OF IRVING BROWN.

4. COMMENT: WE LEARNED OF BROWN'S PLANNED VISIT TO TUNIS THROUGH HIS PHONE CALL TO EMBASSY LABOFF JUNE 5. WE SUSPECT THAT ICFTU ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY VANDERVEKEN HAD BEEN TALKING TO BROWN REGARDING HIS POSSIBLE UTILITY HERE IN DEFUSING THE GOT-UGTT ANTIPATHY OR EVEN POSSIBLY AS SERVING AS AN INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN THE GOT AND THE IMPRISONED FORMER UGTT LEADERS NOW AWAITING TRIAL.
MULCAHY

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